

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of communicating over a communications network comprising the steps of:

defining a first list specifying ~~at least one~~ one or more electronic message sources to which automated reply electronic messages are allowed, the first list being determined by a user of an electronic communication client and stored in a first database communicatively linked to the electronic communication client;

defining a second list specifying ~~at least one~~ one or more electronic message sources to which automated reply electronic messages are allowed, the second list being determined by a system administrator and stored in a second database communicatively linked to the electronic communication client and to an electronic communication server;

defining a set of rules associated with at least one of the electronic message sources in the first list, the rules specifying disabling interception at a server of an automated reply electronic message to the one electronic message source, the rules being determined by the user and stored in the first database;

receiving an electronic message from a source;

comparing the source of the received electronic message with the source in the first and second stored lists;

sending an automated reply electronic message from the electronic communication client if the source matches the source on the first list; and

if the rules do not specify disabling server interception for the source, intercepting

at the server the automated reply electronic message before it is received at the source if the source does not match the source on the second list.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message is an electronic mail message.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message is an instant message.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of activating an auto-reply function in an electronic communication system.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message source is a domain.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message source is an electronic message address to which an automated reply electronic message can be sent.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the ~~electronic message source~~first list specifies that an automated reply electronic message can be sent to any electronic message address listed in a personal address book.

8. (Currently Amended) A machine readable storage, having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

defining a first list specifying ~~at least one~~ one or more electronic message sources

to which automated reply electronic messages are allowed, the first list being determined by a user of an electronic communication client and stored in a first database communicatively linked to the electronic communication client;

defining a second list specifying ~~at least one~~ one or more electronic message sources to which automated reply electronic messages are allowed, the second list being determined by a system administrator and stored in a second database communicatively linked to the electronic communication client and to an electronic communication server;

defining a set of rules associated with at least one of the electronic message sources in the first list, the rules specifying disabling interception at a server of an automated reply electronic message to the one electronic message source, the rules being determined by the user and stored in the first database;

receiving an electronic message from a source;

comparing the source of the received electronic message with the source in the first and second stored lists;

sending an automated reply electronic message from the electronic communication client if the source matches the source on the first list; and

if the rules do not specify disabling server interception for the source, intercepting at the server the automated reply electronic message before it is received at the source if the source does not match the source on the second list.

9. (Original) The machine readable storage of claim 8, wherein the electronic message is an electronic mail message.

10. (Original) The machine readable storage of claim 8, wherein the electronic message is an instant message.

11. (Original) The machine readable storage of claim 8, further causing the machine to perform the step of activating an auto-reply function in an electronic communication system.

12. (Original) The machine readable storage of claim 8, wherein the electronic message source is a domain.

13. (Original) The machine readable storage of claim 8, wherein the electronic message source is an electronic message address to which an automated reply electronic message can be sent.

14. (Currently Amended) The machine readable storage of claim 8, wherein the ~~electronic message source~~ first list specifies that an automated reply electronic message can be sent to any electronic message address listed in a personal address book.

15. (Currently Amended) A system for communicating over a communications network comprising:

means for defining a first list specifying ~~at least one~~ one or more electronic message sources to which automated reply electronic messages are allowed, the first list being determined by a user of an electronic communication client and stored in a first database communicatively linked to the electronic communication client;

means for defining a second list specifying ~~at least one~~ one or more electronic message sources to which automated reply electronic messages are allowed, the second list being determined by a system administrator and stored in a second database communicatively linked to the electronic communication client and to an electronic communication server;

means for defining a set of rules associated with at least one of the electronic message sources in the first list, the rules specifying disabling interception at a server of an automated reply electronic message to the one electronic message source, the rules being determined by the user and stored in the first database;

means for receiving an electronic message from a source;

means for comparing the source of the received electronic message with the source in the first and second stored lists;

means for sending an automated reply electronic message from the electronic communication client if the source matches the source on the first list; and

means for intercepting at the server the automated reply electronic message before it is received at the source if the source does not match the source on the second list and if the rules do not specify disabling server interception for the source.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15, further comprising means for activating an auto-reply function.

17. (Currently Amended) An electronic communication system comprising  
a first electronic communication device for responding to a received electronic message if the electronic message is received from a source identified in a first electronically-stored list of sources provided by a system user; and

a second electronic communication device for comparing the source to a second electronically-stored list of sources provided a system administrator;

wherein the system is configured to selectively provide automated reply electronic messages in response to received electronic messages, wherein said electronic communication system only sends automated reply electronic messages to sources of the received electronic messages that match sources identified in both the first and second

electronically stored lists, and wherein the second electronic communication device intercepts an automated reply electronic message transmitted by the first electronic communication device if the transmitted automated reply electronic message is sent to a source not identified in the second electronically-stored list of sources and if no rule specifying disabling interception by the second electronic communications device of automated reply electronic messages to the source is provided by the system user.

18. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein said first electronic communication device of the system is a client.

19. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein said second electronic communication device of the system is a server.

20. Cancelled.

21. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, further comprising at least one data store communicatively linked to at least one of the first and second electronic communication devices.